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Committee Hears Bill to Add Photos to FoodShare QUEST Cards

Madison, WI – Assembly Bill 222, a bill to add photo identification to FoodShare benefit (QUEST) cards, received a public hearing today in the Assembly's Public Benefit Reform Committee. The bill seeks to eliminate recipient fraud – fraud that occurs when a card is used by a person other than the designated FoodShare recipient – by implementing photos on QUEST cards.

In Wisconsin, recipient fraud amounts to approximately \$14 million, or 1.3 percent of the \$1.11 billion the state receives annually. Recognizing the millions of dollars being wasted by recipient fraud each year, this proposal seeks to help deter future fraud and abuse by implementing the photos as an additional security measure.

The bill, if passed by the Legislature, would require the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to submit an implementation plan and waiver request to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The waiver request would allow DHS to obtain permission to require that FoodShare recipients show a photo QUEST card when making purchases. If both the implementation plan and waiver request are cleared by the USDA, the package goes to the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee for final approval.

Upon adjournment of the committee hearing, Rep. Jesse Kremer, the bill's author, issued the following remarks:

"This bill has nothing to do with cutting benefits, but everything to do with preserving benefits for those who are truly in need. Every year, millions of dollars are wasted by a criminal element in Wisconsin who engage in the trafficking of FoodShare cards. Although the percentage of fraud may seem minimal, tens of millions of our taxpayer dollars are simply being thrown away.

"In this age of technology and stolen identities, banks and other institutions are beginning to implement photos on debit cards as an extra layer of security. It seems reasonable that we should look to do the same in our state benefit programs. To avoid an onerous mandate, it should be noted that photos will not be required of certain groups including the elderly, the disabled, and minors."

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